A. INTRODUCTION

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual,* neighborhood character is considered to be an amalgam of the various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct personality. These elements can include land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and noise, as well as any other physical or social characteristics that help to distinguish the community in question from another.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when the action would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following areas of technical analysis: land use, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, transportation, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the action would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- *Land Use.* Development resulting from a proposed action could alter neighborhood character if it introduces new land uses, conflicts with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or generates significant land use impacts.

- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density.

- *Historic Resources.* When an action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resource analysis identifies a significant impact in this category, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.

- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by introducing substantially different building bulk, form, size, scale, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect block forms, street patterns, or street hierarchies, as well as streetscape elements such as streewalls, landscaping, curbcuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes could affect neighborhood character if they directly alter key visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or block public visual access to such features.

- *Transportation*. Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the action. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* such substantial traffic changes can include: changes in level of service (LOS) to C or below; change in traffic patterns; change in roadway classifications; change in vehicle mixes, substantial increase in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic

impacts, as identified in the technical traffic analysis. Regarding pedestrians, when a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.

- *Noise.* According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* for an action to affect neighborhood character with respect to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability categories.

This chapter of the EIS examines neighborhood character within the area to be rezoned and its surrounding blocks, and the proposed action's effects on that character. The chapter's impact analysis focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas discussed above, since changes to these technical areas are most relevant to potential changes in neighborhood character. The analysis concludes that neighborhood character would change with new land uses and building types, increases in residents and employees, and increases in traffic and pedestrian activity, but the change would not be adverse, as discussed below.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The area affected by the proposed action covers approximately 184 blocks in the north and south-west portions of Greenpoint and Williamsburg, and is bounded generally by the East River, the Williamsburg Bridge, the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, and McGuinness Boulevard (see Figure 9-1). Greenpoint and Williamsburg contain a variety of cultural, religious, racial, ethnic and age groups who reside in several distinct communities, as well as several vibrant shopping strips. For the purposes of assessing existing and future neighborhood character, this chapter discusses the waterfront separately from the upland area (which is divided into Greenpoint and Williamsburg) as each represents a distinct character.

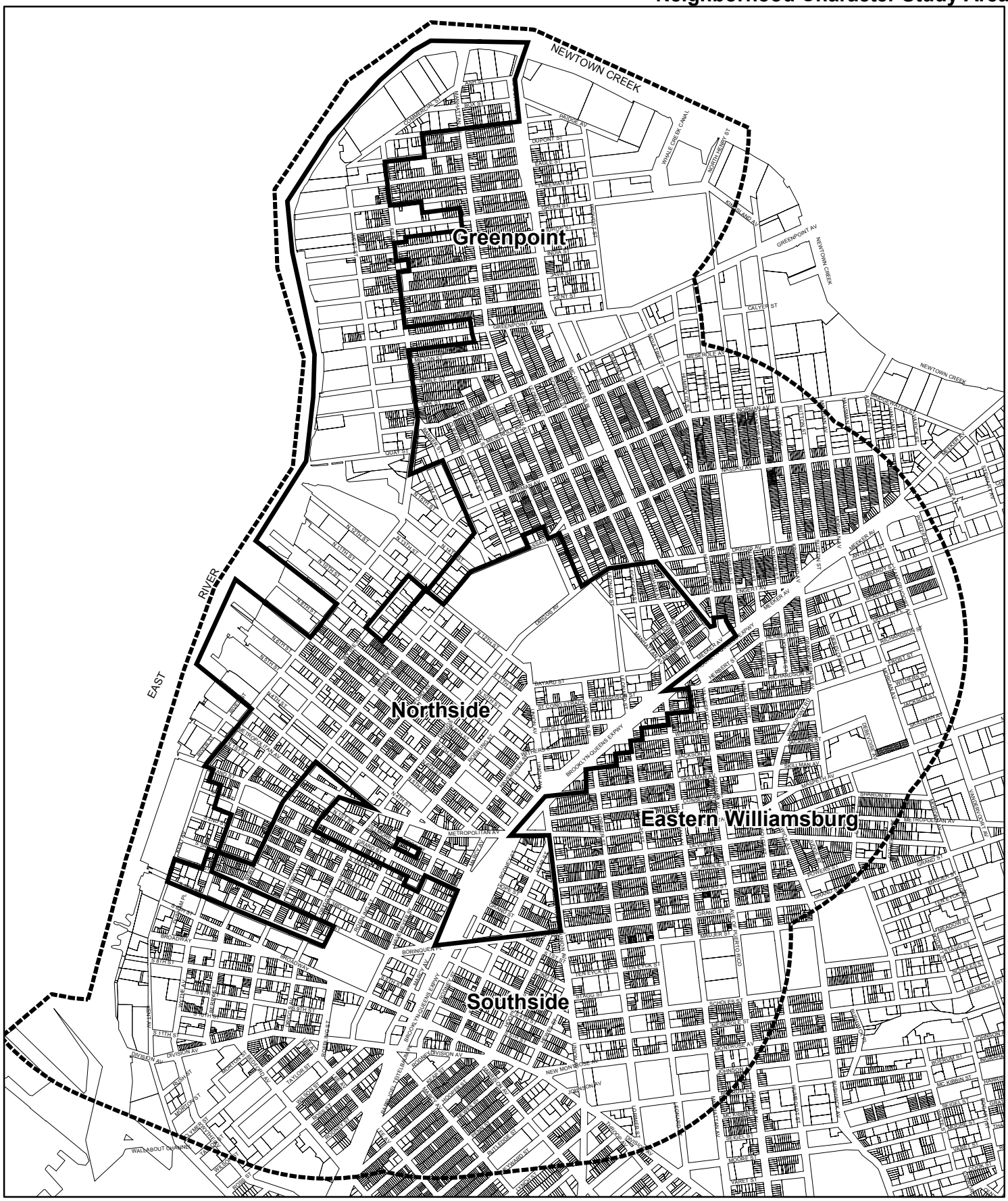
Proposed Action Area

The Waterfront Area

Although zoned for heavy manufacturing, the East River waterfront in both Greenpoint and Williamsburg contains no heavy manufacturing, and is underutilized, with many large parcels of vacant land and many abandoned or only partially occupied buildings.

The waterfront block furthest northeast in the proposed action area, between the Pulaski Bridge and Manhattan Avenue in Greenpoint, contains a soap and candle manufacturer, a vehicle repair shop, a construction contractor's yard, and a multistory industrial building containing two pre-1961 residences. On the west side of Manhattan Avenue is the Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center (GMDC), a loft building which has been redeveloped for a variety of industrial and commercial users, including woodworkers, metalworkers, and design firms. Immediately west of the GMDC building is a loft building largely converted to residential use, a largely vacant two-story warehouse building, and a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bus depot.

Neighborhood Character Study Area



Legend:

- Brooklyn Tax Lots
- Primary Study Area (Proposed Action Area)
- Secondary Land Use Study Area (1/2-Mile Radius)

0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

N

Extending to the west of the MTA depot is the northern half of the Greenpoint Lumber Exchange site, a 22-acre site which is currently used for vehicle and equipment storage. This property consists of two parcels of privately owned land, including a pier at the end of the prolongation of Green Street, separated by a City-owned lot leased to the Lumber Exchange and the Newtown Barge Park, a city park. The New York City Department of Environmental protection (NYCDEP) operates a sludge barge loading facility on the City-owned site and maintains an easement through the City-owned property for a pipeline from the sludge storage tank on an adjacent City-owned lot.

On the blocks south of the Lumber Exchange property, roughly between Green Street and Kent Street, there are several one-story industrial buildings, including buildings for a recently defunct printing company, a furniture wholesaler, and a car dispatch facility. Along the waterfront between Kent Street and Greenpoint Avenue is the former WNYC transmitter site, an approximately 1.6 acre parcel which is currently inaccessible to the public, but planned for improvement as a public park by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). On the same block, there are several existing residential buildings and contractor's facilities.

The Greenpoint Terminal Market site occupies over three blocks of land along the East River between Greenpoint Avenue and Oak Street. This site, which is largely vacant, includes six industrial buildings ranging in height from one to seven stories, several of which are severely deteriorated. Immediately south of the Greenpoint Terminal Market is a now vacant piece of land formerly occupied by Consolidated Freight, a national freight forwarding company that declared bankruptcy in August 2002.

The waterfront block between Quay Street and the Bushwick Inlet contains an MTA garage, small one-story industrial and commercial buildings, and vacant land. On the southern edge of the inlet is a fuel depot owned by Bayside Fuel, containing storage tanks and ancillary structures such as garages and maintenance facilities. A document storage facility, Department of Sanitation garage, and an automobile impound lot occupy the blocks south of Bayside Fuel between North 12th and North 9th Streets.

The remaining waterfront blocks in the proposed action area, between North 3rd and North 7th Streets, contain vacant land used for vehicle storage, a paper recycling facility, and a loft building (184 Kent Avenue) mostly converted to residential use.

The Upland Area

The upland portion of the primary study area is characterized by mixed residential, commercial, and institutional uses. The distinctive physical character of Greenpoint and Williamsburg is shaped by a mix of low- and mid-rise residential and industrial buildings in the upland neighborhood. In general, three types of buildings predominate in the upland area: three- to four-story brick or frame buildings often with stoops, which form a continuous street wall; five- to six-story apartment buildings and older industrial loft buildings; and low-rise industrial buildings and vacant land.

Housing in the primary study area is concentrated in neighborhood cores in the upland areas, with retail concentrated along the main commercial streets of Bedford Avenue in Williamsburg and Manhattan Avenue in Greenpoint, which offer a wide range of commercial and retail activity. Retail and other commercial uses are also scattered throughout the surrounding mixed-use area. In addition, an increasing amount of conversion from industrial to residential uses has taken place within the proposed action area, particularly in Williamsburg.

Greenpoint

In Greenpoint, the upland portion of the proposed action area abuts the residential core of the neighborhood, which is centered around the commercial corridor of Manhattan Avenue. The blocks between Franklin and West Streets from Eagle to Java Street contain older residential buildings as well as several recently constructed apartment buildings. Clusters of residential buildings, many of which were built prior to the implementation of the current manufacturing zoning in 1961, also occur on the block bounded by Box Street, Clay Street, Manhattan Avenue, and McGuinness Boulevard; and on the block bounded by Oak, Calyer, West, and Franklin Streets.

The remaining portion of the proposed action area in Greenpoint, in the areas west of Manhattan Avenue and Franklin Street, is characterized by a mix of industrial buildings, nonconforming residential buildings, and loft buildings at least partially converted to residential use. On the west side of Franklin Street between Milton and Noble Streets is the American Playground, a park nearly one acre in size.

Williamsburg

Central to the Williamsburg section of the proposed action area is the commercial strip along Bedford Avenue and the residential core of the Northside neighborhood. Roughly from North 4th to North 10th Streets, Bedford Avenue has developed into a lively and nearly continuous string of shops, restaurants, and bars with residential use above. Because the NYCT L rapid transit line stops directly at Bedford Avenue and North 7th Street, this commercial area has become an attraction for visitors and residents alike. The surrounding blocks to the east and west are comprised mostly of three- to four-story residential buildings dating from the first two decades of the twentieth century, but also include a number of residentially converted industrial buildings. Additional clusters of residential buildings exist to the northeast of McCarren Park along Graham Avenue; along Grand Street, which also contains numerous ground-floor commercial uses; and on the blocks bounded by Grand Street, Wythe Avenue, North 3rd Street, and Berry Street.

Northside Gardens, a Mitchell-Lama development, consists of two three-story cooperative buildings located on the block bordered by Bedford Avenue, North 4th, North 5th, and Berry Streets. This development is subsidized for moderate-income families and contains 41 apartments. Northside Gardens is directly adjacent to an urban renewal area (URA), the Bedford-North 3rd URA, which encompasses the three blocks bounded by North 5th, North 3rd, and Berry Streets; and Bedford and Metropolitan Avenues. Urban renewal areas are discussed in greater detail in the "Public Policy" section of this chapter.

Outside these concentrations of residential buildings, a mix of industrial, residential, and commercial uses exists. To the south and west of the Northside residential core is a patchwork of industrial buildings, numerous loft buildings partially or fully converted to residential use, early twentieth-century residential buildings, automotive uses, and vacant lots. While the mix of uses varies, every block in this area contains residential use. Among the residentially converted buildings in this area are 151 Kent Avenue, and the Esquire building at South 1st Street and Wythe Avenue, a condominium in a 16-story building formerly used for the manufacture of shoe polish.

The blocks south of McCarren Park on either side of Union Avenue, and the blocks just east of the park along Manhattan Avenue, are characterized by a similar mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses interspersed with vacant lots. The proposed action area also includes portions of a few blocks just east of the BQE, where nonconforming residential buildings are mixed with industrial buildings, auto repair shops, and vacant lots. The proposed action area also includes nine blocks east of the BQE,

bounded by Metropolitan Avenue, Union Avenue, Borinquen Place, and Rodney Street. These blocks contain a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings as well as vacant lots and auto repair yards.

Five blocks located just north of the Williamsburg bridge, between South 5th Place and Kent Avenue, contain a mix of loft buildings, several of which have been residentially converted, low-rise industrial buildings, and nonconforming residential buildings.

An area between McCarren Park and Kent Avenue/Franklin Street, roughly between North 9th Street and Calyer Street, is characterized primarily by modern, one- and two-story industrial buildings and contains almost no residential use. This area contains a number of active industrial firms and many industrial jobs, in such activities as food manufacturing and distribution, brewing, glass and metal product manufacturers, plastic products manufacturing, and construction.

Community facilities in the proposed action area are concentrated in areas with more residential land use, namely upland areas where housing is concentrated and located farther from the waterfront, which were dominated by manufacturing and industry. The proposed action area, anchored by the waterfront, contains fewer community facilities than the secondary study area. Public schools, libraries, and day care facilities are centered along the residential core upland from the waterfront, and are generally located in and around the Northside, Southside/South Williamsburg, and Eastern Williamsburg neighborhoods. Public safety facilities (fire and police protection); hospital facilities and ambulatory programs; and facilities for seniors are situated in the Williamsburg area, with some in central Greenpoint as well. Churches in the proposed action area include Sts. Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church on South 2nd Street between Berry Street and Wythe Avenue, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church on North 8th Street between Havemeyer Street and Marcy Avenue.

Secondary Study Area

As suggested in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for neighborhood character will be coterminous with the ½-mile land use study area, although the area considered in this assessment has been adjusted to take account of natural and man-made barriers that separate the area from Queens on the north and east, and to include in their entirety those blocks falling partially but substantially within the ½-mile radius. As shown in Figure 9-1, the secondary study area covers an area bound at its outer limits by Newtown Creek to the north, the East River to the west, North Henry Street/Vandervoort Avenue to the east, and is roughly aligned with Boerum Street to the south. The secondary study area encompasses the entire Greenpoint and Williamsburg neighborhoods which includes Eastern Williamsburg and Southside/South Williamsburg.

Greenpoint

The northeastern section of Greenpoint houses a substantial industrial base. Heavy industrial uses are primarily located in the eastern portion of the Newtown Creek waterfront. Further to the east of the proposed action area, on the portion of Greenpoint bordering Newtown Creek, is the Newtown Creek Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP), the largest wastewater treatment facility in the city, with a capacity of approximately 310 million gallons per day. The area around Newtown Creek also contains various heavy industrial uses, including waste transfer stations, and petroleum and natural gas storage facilities. The north side of Paidge Street is occupied by the Motiva natural gas and diesel fuel product

terminal and two warehouse structures to the east of the terminal. A vacant lot separates this row of structures from the Whale Creek Canal to the east, which extends southward to abut the Newtown Creek WPCP.

Industrial and manufacturing establishments in eastern Greenpoint are prevalent in the area between McGuinness Boulevard and the Newtown Creek WPCP from the waterfront to Greenpoint Avenue, the region from Newtown Creek WPCP southeast to Norman Avenue, and the area several blocks to the south and east of the intersection of Meeker and Kingsland Avenues. Buildings in these areas range from one- to three-stories and generally house smaller industries or warehouses.

The residential core of the Greenpoint portion of the secondary study area extends north and south from the intersection of Manhattan and Greenpoint Avenues, where the Greenpoint Avenue stop of the NYCT G subway line is located. The portion of the secondary study area between Franklin Street and McGuiness Boulevard is characterized by two- to four-story residential buildings with community facilities such as churches scattered throughout. The busy retail strip of Manhattan Avenue is centered around this rapid transit access point. This area is the retail core of Greenpoint, and a home to many local retail establishments such as restaurants, bakeries, and shops that serve the needs of nearby residents are situated on the ground floor of multi-story residential buildings. Other corridors with substantial ground-floor retail activity include Nassau and Driggs Avenues east of McCarren Park.

Williamsburg

The southern portion of the secondary study area falls within the Eastern and Southside/South Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Eastern Williamsburg is the area located to the east of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and Southside/South Williamsburg is the area located to the south of Broadway (refer to Figure 9-1). The Domino Sugar refinery site, located on the waterfront between Grand Avenue and South 5th Street, was an active manufacturing facility and major employer until January 2004, when it shut down its refining operations at this location. The facility has announced that it plans to maintain 20 of the approximately 250 employees to continue the packaging operations until September 2004.

Just to the south of the Domino Sugar site lies the Williamsburg Bridge, which has provided a connection between the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn and the Lower East Side area of Manhattan since its completion in 1903. The bridge has physical roadway connections that ramp down to Broadway in addition to its elevated connection to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

The waterfront to the south of the Williamsburg Bridge is occupied by a restaurant, warehouse facilities, a City-owned automotive facility, and the Certified Lumber site with its southern frontage on Division Avenue. Residential development is currently underway on the former site of the Schaefer Brewery. When completed, this development will contain 350 residential units in buildings up to 25 stories, ground floor retail, and a publicly accessible waterfront walkway. On the waterfront just south of Division Street, there is a shut-down power plant, currently owned by Con Edison.

In the southern portion of the secondary study area, residential use predominates to the south and east of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway/Meeker Avenue, in close proximity to the public transit available along Metropolitan Avenue. Blocks in this area are sometimes anchored by local retail uses at the corners, such as delicatessens or laundromats, and also contain residences, ranging from two- to three-story attached and semi-attached single and multi-family homes to two- to four-story attached apartment buildings.

Subsidized housing developments, such as public housing properties managed by the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) that are subsidized for low-income families, as well as State- and City-subsidized Mitchell-Lama Properties for middle-income families, are found throughout the secondary study area. These developments are found at the south edge of Southside-Williamsburg and along the eastern edge of Eastern Williamsburg, where they occupy the edges of predominantly residential areas, while blocks further south and further east, become more industrial in character.

Three NYCHA housing developments, the Jonathan Williams Plaza Houses, the Taylor-Wythe Houses, and Independence Towers, are found in the Southside/South Williamsburg portion of the secondary study area, just to the south of the Williamsburg Bridge. The housing developments found in this area are generally high-rise building complexes ranging in heights from eight- to 21-story buildings that contain open space areas. The NYCHA housing developments found in Eastern Williamsburg, the Cooper Park Houses and the Williamsburg Houses, are lower-rise building complexes ranging in heights from four- to seven-story buildings.

Thoroughfares containing substantial amounts of ground-floor retail include Graham Avenue, Grand Street, Manhattan Avenue, and Lee Avenue, where food markets, laundromats, restaurants, and local retail stores are located.

C. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION (NO-ACTION)

Proposed Action Area

Several projects, independent of the proposed action, are being planned or constructed within the proposed action area in the future. While these developments may result in some changes to neighborhood character, most of the action area is expected to retain its characteristics, and overall neighborhood character would be minimally affected.

In the future without the proposed action, it is expected that the current land use trends and general development patterns would continue. These trends and patterns are characterized by an overall decline in heavy industrial and manufacturing uses and a continued shift to lighter industrial uses and as of-right residential development. Existing zoning designations that permit new residential development as-of-right do not include height limits and therefore in some cases could result in buildings taller than their surrounding area. Given increasing demand for residential conversion and development, requests for BSA variances to permit residential use in areas zoned for manufacturing, and the deterioration of vacant land and buildings are expected to continue. Moreover, it is anticipated that the waterfront would remain inaccessible to the public in the future without the proposed action, and no new parkland would be provided within the action area (with the exception of the former WNYC transmitter site and Manhattan Avenue street end project discussed in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy”).

There is a development proposal at 184 Kent Avenue, which is located within the proposed action area, that has filed an application for a BSA variance for new residential use within a manufacturing building. This proposed project is anticipated to generate up to 256 dwelling units (DUs), as well as a publicly accessible waterfront promenade.

Projected Development Sites

In the future without the proposed action (No-Action), some as-of-right and variance development is expected to occur on the 76 projected development sites identified in Chapter 1, "Project Description." As discussed in detail in Chapter 1, two RWCDS, Scenario A and Scenario B, are analyzed. No-Action development in both Scenario A and B would be essentially identical, except that Scenario B assumes that a 1,100-megawatt power plant would be developed on the former Bayside Fuel site under No-Action conditions and would continue to occupy the site in the future with the proposed action, and a smaller park would be developed. The facility, proposed by the TransGas Energy Company would be an estimated 187,125 sf in size.

Under Scenario B, the development of a 1,100-megawatt power plant would likely result in changes in character to the immediate area. The proposed power plant would consist of several structures of varying sizes. The most prominent structures associated with the proposed power plant are the gas turbine building, exhaust tower and air-cooled condensers. The gas turbine building would be approximately 400 feet long by 290 feet wide, with its tallest point at 122 feet above grade. The exhaust tower would be a 325-foot tall structure and the two air-cooled condensers would be approximately 130 feet above grade, with a width and length of 200 by 400 feet. Ancillary facilities within the power plant would be smaller and less prominent than the structures described above[1]. The development of the proposed power plant is also anticipated to provide access to the waterfront, which is currently not available. Urban design elements would change with the development of a new power plant as it would be of a substantially larger scale and bulk than surrounding uses and would be visible from parts of McCarren Park and from locations in and above the East River.

Secondary Study Area

In addition to the continuation of existing trends, from heavy industrial and manufacturing uses towards lighter industry and residential conversions, and resulting as-of-right development, there are also 83 developments in the secondary study area that are expected to be developed in the future without the proposed action. These developments would result in 2,188 DUs and 39,300 sf of commercial space as discussed in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy."

Greenpoint

Building permits have been granted for ten residential developments within the Greenpoint neighborhood, with most of these planned developments located in the southeastern section of the neighborhood. Most of these developments would replace existing vacant or underutilized sites. These new residential developments would be consistent with the small-scale residential character of this area of Greenpoint. In addition, a continuous streetwall would be created, enhancing the visual quality of these blocks. While these developments would affect the areas immediately surrounding the proposed action area, the small number of developments planned would not change the character of the Greenpoint neighborhood significantly and it would remain essentially the same as it is today.

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[1] *TransGas Energy Facility*: *Application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need Pursuant to Article X of the New York State Public Service Law;* Volume 1, Page 10-21. Prepared by TRC Environmental Corporation, December 2002.

Williamsburg

Seventy three residential developments are planned within the Williamsburg area, mostly located in the Southside/South Williamsburg and Eastern Williamsburg neighborhoods[2]. As in Greenpoint, these new residential developments would replace existing vacant or underutilized sites. These new residential developments would be relatively small in scale, with the exception of four sites located in Southside-Williamsburg (refer to Figure 2-6 in Chapter 2 "Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy") which would be developed with four large residential buildings with the number of residential dwelling units ranging from 130 to 540. Three of these four sites are located along the waterfront and would replace former industrial uses with residential and commercial uses. The new residential development in Eastern and Southside/South Williamsburg would strengthen the existing residential character of these neighborhoods.

The anticipated development that would occur in the study area in the future without the proposed action would change the character of the immediate neighborhoods of Greenpoint and Williamsburg to a more vibrant residential community that is compatible with adjacent institutional and residential uses. The urban design and visual character of the area would be improved as a continuous streetwall would be created on the affected blocks, replacing vacant and underutilized sites. Although traffic and noise may increase slightly as a result of these new residential developments, these increases are not expected to impact neighborhood character.

D. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

This section discusses potential changes in the character of the proposed action area and the surrounding study area by 2013. This section focuses on potential changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas of Land Use, Socioeconomic Conditions, Historic Resources, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Traffic and Pedestrians, and Noise. Changes in these technical areas are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character as follows:

- *Land Use.* The Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy analysis (see Chapter 2) indicates that the proposed action would change the scale and density of land use within the proposed action area while maintaining the current mix of residential, light industrial, retail, and community facility uses. These changes would bring about related changes to urban design, visual resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and pedestrians, which would affect neighborhood character.

- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* The Socioeconomic Conditions analysis (see Chapter 3) indicates that by 2013, the proposed action could result in the direct displacement of approximately 9 residents and an estimated 38 businesses and 580 employees. However, the direct displacement would not result in a significant adverse impact. As also discussed in Chapter 3, the proposed action has the potential to cause significant indirect residential displacement impacts.

[2] Although Sites S10 through S15 and S24 are currently developed, at the time existing conditions were compiled in late 2003, final certificates of occupancy had not been issued, and they were not fully occupied. Therefore, they are included in the No-Action condition for analysis purposes.

- *Historic Resources.* The analysis in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," found that the proposed action would not have any direct adverse impacts on any designated historic architectural resources but could affect some eligible architectural resources, and would have adverse impacts on archaeological resources in the proposed action area. However, archaeological resources do not contribute to the overall character of a neighborhood and the identified impact on archaeological resources would therefore not impact the neighborhood character of the proposed action area.

- *Urban Design and Visual Resources*. The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Chapter 8) indicates that the proposed action would result in considerable changes to the urban design and visual quality of the area, specifically along the waterfront. These would include substantial changes to building bulk, form, size, and scale, as well as enhancements to streetscape elements. Most of the projected development in Greenpoint would occur along the waterfront with some of the projected development in Williamsburg occurring along the waterfront. As such, the projected development would alter the views of the waterfront from both Brooklyn and Manhattan. Contextual zoning districts would be applied to most of the upland portions of the proposed action area, limiting building heights and street wall setbacks. As such, new development within the upland areas would be of similar scale and height to existing buildings and would enhance the visual character of the area by creating a continuous streetwall on blocks that are currently broken by vacant and underutilized sites. Additionally, contextual zoning districts require the planting of street trees, which would visually enhance the streetscape.

- *Transportation.* The Traffic and Parking analysis (see Chapter 16) indicates that the proposed action would result in traffic impacts in a number of locations in the study area. The analysis also notes that all of the identified traffic impacts would be fully or partially addressed with operational mitigation measures (see Chapter 22, "Mitigation"). The analysis also projects a decrease in truck traffic in the proposed action area as a result of the proposed action as former industrial uses would be replaced with residential and commercial uses. In terms of parking, although some of the vehicles associated with new residential development would not be accommodated in accessory off-street parking in the future with the proposed action, it is expected that overflow demand would occupy the available on-street curbside parking overnight. No significant adverse impacts to study area parking conditions would therefore result from the proposed action. The Transit and Pedestrian analysis (see Chapter 17) indicates that demand from projected development sites would significantly impact one street stair at the Bedford Avenue subway station.

- *Noise.* As discussed in Chapter 19, noise increases as a result of additional traffic that would accompany the proposed residential developments are expected to be imperceptible in the vast majority of locations throughout the proposed action area, especially considering the expected reductions in truck traffic. These noise increases are not expected to result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. In addition, buildings constructed in the area would be required to attenuate noise to achieve acceptable interior noise levels.

Projected Development Sites

The potential impacts of the proposed action have been assessed via a reasonable worst case development scenario (RWCDS), as discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description". Development Scenario A projects that the proposed action could result in the incremental development of 7,391 DUs, 253,698 sf of local retail, and a new park with approximately 27.8 acres of land area. New development induced by the proposed action under Scenario B, would be identical to Scenario A, but with a smaller park at Site 211, which would have land area of approximately 15.9 acres. Scenario B also assumes that the 1,100 MW power plant assumed under No-Action conditions for Scenario B would continue to occupy the Bayside Fuel site, which constitutes a portion of projected Site 211, in the future with the proposed action, and the area at the northern edge of Bushwick Inlet would remain vacant.

Land Use Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The land use in the proposed action area is the strongest factor in determining the character of the area because changes to the land use would alter the "look and feel" of the area, and the levels of activity in the area. Land use changes would spur changes to neighborhood character in the area of visual resources, urban design, socioeconomic conditions, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The proposed action would spur changes in the area's land use patterns, with new, large-scale developments on a number of sites in the proposed action area. The proposed action would acknowledge the need for mixed use districts that can accommodate light manufacturing/industrial uses alongside residential and commercial use. The proposed action would allow the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized lots, especially those located along the waterfront, that have been subject to a steadily declining demand for parcels zoned for manufacturing and industrial use. In addition, developments under the proposed action would help create the critical mass of commercial, institutional, residential, and open space uses which is often necessary to help create a more vibrant community that is active for a greater portion of the day and night.

Greenpoint

The Greenpoint portion of the primary study area is anticipated to continue its transition from its mixture of industrial land uses, vacant land and structures, and non-conforming residential use to an active mixed-use neighborhood, with new residential and commercial uses occupying currently vacant and underutilized land among existing residential and industrial uses.

The blocks just west of Franklin Street between Eagle and Java Streets would remain predominantly residential, with new four- to five-story residential buildings rising on the few vacant and underutilized lots between existing houses and apartment buildings. The maximum streetwall height of 40 feet for new buildings would ensure that new buildings in these areas fit the surrounding context. Green Street would develop with a mix of residential and commercial uses, with new residential buildings and ground floor local retail extending west from Manhattan Avenue to the water's edge. Franklin Street would continue as a residential corridor with ground floor retail. The blocks between Franklin and West Streets and between Dupont and Box Streets would become increasingly mixed in use, with some underutilized loft buildings converting to residential use, and new five- to six-story residential buildings filling vacant and underutilized land between industrial and residential buildings.

West Street would accommodate ground-floor retail uses on both the waterfront and upland sides of the street, addressing the needs of area residents, and adding activity at street level. Greenpoint Avenue would also become a corridor accommodating local retail uses, connecting the Manhattan Avenue retail corridor to the waterfront, leading up to the WNYC Transmitter Park. New buildings permitted along the east side of West Street would be limited to 60 feet in height at the streetwall, and 70 feet in total height, heights similar to those of existing loft buildings in this corridor, and generally matching the maximum height of permitted buildings on the opposite side of West Street.

The RWCDS does not specifically project any new community facilities within the proposed action area. However, community facilities, the locations of which are generally correlated with residential areas, may be expected to increase in number and also diversify in location, as the area becomes increasingly residential.

Williamsburg

The Williamsburg portion of the primary study area would experience a substantial increase in the availability of land zoned for residential and mixed residential and light industrial uses, especially in the Northside area. In the core of the Northside residential neighborhood, on the blocks surrounding Bedford Avenue where residential development is currently permitted as-of-right, residential buildings of four to five stories would be developed on parcels of vacant and underutilized land, continuing a trend toward new housing that is already underway today. However, unlike the existing zoning, under which building permits have recently been filed for several taller buildings on sites in the proposed action area, the proposed zoning changes would limit new buildings in these areas to 40 feet in height at the streetwall and 50 feet overall, preventing the construction of tall buildings out of scale with their surroundings. Commercial overlay districts would accommodate the retail activity of Bedford Avenue, reinforcing this important local commercial strip. New development at the corner of Bedford Avenue and North 12th Street would bring activity to a long vacant site at the edge of McCarren Park.

Areas of Williamsburg currently characterized by a mix of residential and industrial uses, including the blocks to the south and west of the Bedford Avenue residential core, between Berry Street and Kent Avenue, and the blocks on either side of Union Avenue and east of the BQE, would experience new residential development on vacant and underutilized land amidst existing residential and industrial uses. These new buildings would be permitted to rise no higher than 60 feet at the streetwall, a height characteristic of loft buildings throughout the area.

On blocks between Berry Street and Kent Avenue, between North 3rd Street and North 9th Street, where numerous loft buildings have already been converted to residential use, the continued conversion of loft buildings to residential or mixed use is expected. In addition, new housing and local retail would be developed in buildings whose height and scale would be consistent with the loft buildings that characterize much of this area. New buildings permitted along the east side of Kent Avenue would be limited to 60 feet in height at the streetwall, and 70 feet in total height, heights similar to those of existing loft buildings in this corridor, and matching the maximum heights of permitted buildings on the opposite side of Kent Avenue.

North 6th Street would continue its emergence as a local commercial strip, adding new retail uses such as restaurants and shops, along with new housing development. Currently vacant or underutilized buildings in the area near Union Avenue would experience the development of new, six- to seven-story residential buildings. Commercial overlays along Grand Street would recognize the local retail along this street, making possible a more continuous retail frontage. In the Southside area of Williamsburg,

residential zoning would be applied in areas primarily occupied by residential and community facility uses, while mixed use districts would accommodate both new residential uses and commercial and light industrial uses. On the approximately five blocks just north of the Williamsburg Bridge, converted loft buildings and new residential buildings would be interspersed with a variety of existing industrial and residential buildings of varied heights. New housing would coexist with existing industrial, commercial, and residential uses on the blocks east of the BQE and south of Metropolitan Avenue.

As noted above, new development induced by the proposed action would be identical under both Scenarios A and B, with the exception of development on projected Site 211. As noted above, under Scenario B, a smaller park would be provided on Site 211, which would have land area of approximately 15.9 acres. Therefore, the proposed action's effects on land use in the primary study area would be essentially the same for the two Scenarios. Scenario B also assumes that the 1,100 MW power plant assumed under No-Action conditions for Scenario B would continue to occupy the Bayside Fuel site.

Socioeconomic Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," it is concluded that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts on direct residential displacement, direct business displacement, effects on specific industries, and indirect business displacement in the proposed action area or the larger Greenpoint-Williamsburg study area. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, the proposed action has the potential to cause significant indirect residential displacement. Conclusions related to indirect residential development, as outlined in the *CEQR Technical Manual,* are summarized below.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* suggests that a population increase of 5 percent or more could be large enough to trigger a socioeconomic change that would negatively affect a population at risk of displacement. The proposed action would introduce an estimated 17,731 residents to the proposed action area, approximately 15,872, or 78 percent, more than anticipated under No-Action conditions. This increase far exceeds the 5 percent threshold laid out in the *CEQR Technical Manual*. However, in recent years, the proposed action area has experienced a substantial amount of new market rate residential development and an influx of residents with higher-income occupations. As a whole, the socioeconomic characteristics of the population living in the proposed action area is already changing and is likely to continue to change over the next several years. Nonetheless, the socioeconomic characteristics of new households introduced under the proposed action would probably be different from the characteristics of the population living in a portion of the unprotected housing units in some parts of the study area. These residents constitute the "vulnerable" population—those who could be subject to indirect displacement under the proposed action.

In total, it is estimated that vulnerable population in the Greenpoint-Williamsburg study area is limited to approximately 2,510 residents who could be subject to indirect displacement pressures under the proposed action. These people are living in approximately 838 housing units located in the proposed action area and primary study area. Roughly 620 of those residents live in the far eastern portion of the proposed action area, in Census tract 499. The remaining 1,890 residents live in the primary study area—in Census tracts 525 and 527 to the south of the proposed action area boundary, and in Census tract 579 in the far northern section of Greenpoint. Overall, the vulnerable population represents less than 2 percent of the total study area population and between 2 and 3 percent of the population living in the proposed action area and primary study area, and the potential indirect displacement of this population would not have a significant adverse effect on neighborhood character.

Historic Resources Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," a portion of the proposed action area falls within the Greenpoint Historic District, although no projected or potential development sites have been identified in that area. Should any development take place within the Greenpoint Historic District in the future pursuant to the proposed new zoning, it would require a Certificate of Appropriateness from LPC, which would ensure that it is consistent with the character of the designated historic district.

The analysis in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," found that there would be no direct impacts to known architectural resources as a result of the proposed action. However, there is one potential and one designated landmark located on projected and potential development sites and three designated architectural resources located adjacent to some projected and potential development sites, including the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord. The proposed action and subsequent developments are not expected to have any direct physical impacts on any existing designated architectural resources, as they would not result in any physical destruction, demolition, damage or alteration to any designated historic property. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, the buildings comprising the Greenpoint Terminal Market site, which may be eligible for S/NR listing and/or LPC designation, would likely be demolished entirely or in part to facilitate new development on some of the projected and potential development sites. Although the Greenpoint Terminal Market is considered by the community as a visual landmark and a symbol of the area's industrial heritage, the vacant buildings have been deteriorating throughout the years and are severely dilapidated. As these buildings are privately owned, such demolition can be carried out as long as no federal, state, or City governmental discretionary permits or funding are involved, and can occur in the absence of the proposed action as well. Should future redevelopment on those sites involve federal, state, or City governmental discretionary permits or funding, measures to preserve the eligible structures may be required. The possible partial or entire demolition of these structures would impact neighborhood character in a beneficial way as the existing dilapidated buildings would be replaced with new residential development, improving the area's visual character and enhancing access to the waterfront.

The projected and potential developments to be constructed subsequent to the proposed action are also not expected to have significant adverse indirect impacts on existing historic resources in the area. As such, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character can be expected in relation to historic resources.

Urban Design and Visual Resources Impacts on Neighborhood Character

In the 2013 future with the proposed action, significant, but not adverse, changes would be made to urban design conditions in the proposed action area. The Greenpoint and Williamsburg waterfronts would undergo the most appreciable change, as new bulk, heights, and uses would result in vibrant residential streetscapes, revitalizing the decaying industrial waterfront that exists today. Tall residential buildings of varied bulk and design would be located along the water's edge while low-rise buildings would be located at the neighborhoods' edge to create a smooth transition of scale from the waterfront to areas further upland. As a result of the proposed action, the placement of locally-oriented retail uses at street level and the planting of street trees would transform barren streets into active and appealing streetscapes featuring amenities conducive to pedestrian activity. The provisions of the waterfront zoning text and the waterfront access plan (WAP) set forth by the proposed action would create a shore public walkway in conjunction with waterfront development, ensure a variation of the skyline through floor plate and setback requirements, and maintain upland connections to the waterfront in the absence of public streets, ensuring that the portions of Greenpoint and Williamsburg that are navigable and attractive to pedestrians extend

past Kent Avenue and West Street. In the upland areas, the implementation of contextual zoning would provide a structured system for residential and mixed-use development to exhibit sensitivity to the scale of its context through streetwall, height, and setback regulations while acknowledging ongoing trends of development. The diversity of uses in the upland areas would be maintained through mixed-use zoning and commercial overlays.

The proposed action would set forth several changes to street pattern and block form along the waterfront, which are not anticipated to adversely affect urban design, but are expected to improve urban design conditions. Accompanying the development of Inlet Park, several streets would be demapped to be mapped as park with surrounding parcels. Block form would be affected by the reopening of streets that are closed off by waterfront parcels spanning multiple lots. Upland street pattern, block form, and building arrangement would be maintained.

No adverse impacts upon visual resources are anticipated as a result of the proposed action. The proposed action would considerably change views of and within the proposed action area, but would not block significant public view corridors, vistas, or natural or built features. Shore public walkways and supplemental access areas established by the WAP would create new settings from which to enjoy improved views of the East River, the Manhattan skyline, and the Williamsburg Bridge. Visual corridors established by the WAP will ensure waterfront views are maintained when access is not physically available, while supplemental access areas and shore public walkways will create many new vistas from which to enjoy the visual environment along the East River. Lastly, under Scenario A, the proposed action would create Inlet Park, a new visual resource that would reintroduce access to the Bushwick Inlet. Under Scenario B, the TransGas Energy Facility would be sited to the south of the Inlet, and although Inlet Park would be created, its smaller form would not extend to the Bushwick Inlet. As such, visual resources that would be provided at the Bushwick Inlet under Scenario A would not be provided by the proposed action under Scenario B.

Transportation Impacts on Neighborhood Character

Increases in traffic, transit, and pedestrian levels in the study area as a result of the proposed action would also affect neighborhood character. Traffic would increase over future No-Action levels as a result of the new residential and commercial development in the proposed action area. These increases would result in significant traffic impacts throughout the area, particularly along McGuinness Boulevard and Kent Avenue, two major north-south arterials within the study area. Additionally, bus and subway ridership demand would increase as a result of the proposed action.

Traffic and Parking

Chapter 16, "Traffic and Parking," analyzes the effects of added traffic and parking demand from projected development sites on the Greenpoint and Williamsburg street network during the weekday AM, midday, and PM peak hours. The results of the analyses show that project demand would create significant traffic impacts, with the PM peak hour having the most impacts, with nine impacted intersections (eight signalized, one unsignalized), followed by the AM and the midday, with six (four signalized, two unsignalized) and four (all signalized) impacted intersections, respectively. The effects of traffic on neighborhood character would be most apparent on the thoroughfares discussed above. However, as discussed above, the proposed action would likely reduce truck traffic in the area, further enhancing the residential character of the neighborhood. Chapter 22, "Mitigation," of this EIS provides a description of measures developed to mitigate the traffic impacts identified in the traffic analysis. As discussed in Chapter 22, all of the identified traffic impacts would be mitigated, with the exception of the

identified impact on the eastbound Greenpoint Avenue approach to McGuinness Boulevard in the AM peak hour, which would remain unmitigated. However, the unmitigated impact at this intersection (which is located outside the proposed action area) would not be expected to adversely affect neighborhood character in the proposed action area or the surrounding area. As most of the traffic impacts in the area would be fully mitigated, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character are anticipated in relation to traffic.

It is expected that the accessory off-street parking capacity provided under the proposed action would be sufficient to accommodate peak retail/commercial demand in the weekday midday, and that the 1,889 spaces of overnight on-street parking demand that would be generated by the proposed action could be readily accommodated by the available on-street supply. No significant adverse impacts to study area parking conditions would therefore result from the proposed action. As such, while on-street parking demand would increase slightly as a result of the proposed action, the increase would not have significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

Transit and Pedestrians

Chapter 17, "Transit and Pedestrians," analyzes the effects of added travel demand from projected development sites on subway stations, local bus services and pedestrian facilities within Greenpoint and Williamsburg during the AM and PM peak hours. The results of the analyses show that demand from projected development sites would significantly impact one street stair at the Bedford Avenue subway station. Stair S3 at the southeast corner of Bedford Avenue and North 7th Street would be impacted in both the AM and PM peak hours. Manhattan-bound subway demand generated by the proposed action would also result in a significant adverse line haul impact to Manhattan-bound L trains in the AM peak hour. In addition, new local bus trips generated by projected development sites would result in a significant PM peak hour impact to NYC Transit's B61 bus route in the northbound direction. New pedestrian demand would not, however, result in any significant adverse impacts to analyzed sidewalks, corner areas or crosswalks in either peak hour. Chapter 22, "Mitigation," provides a description of measures to be developed to mitigate the transit impacts identified in this chapter.

The increased pedestrian activity would have a beneficial effect on neighborhood character. An increase in foot traffic could help create a safer urban environment and improve economic activity by increasing the customer base for area retail stores. Moreover, street life in Greenpoint and Williamsburg would be increasingly enlivened, and the vibrancy and activity of the existing neighborhood would extend to a newly active and accessible waterfront.

Noise Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 19, noise increases as a result of the additional traffic that would accompany the proposed action are expected to be imperceptible at all monitoring sites. However, based on monitoring results for receptor sites located along Kent Avenue (a truck route) between North 8th and North 9th Streets and North 11th and North 12th Streets, noise levels of approximately 75 to 79 dBA would be expected at the proposed public park to be built at the Bayside Oil site. These noise levels are higher than those generally recommended for parks and places of outdoor activities. However, these ambient noise levels are comparable to noise levels at many locations in many existing City parks that are adjacent to similar roads and would not adversely affect neighborhood character. There are no mitigation measures to reduce noise levels within an existing urban park such as this to recommended park levels. However, it would be expected that these noise levels would quickly diminish at locations in the park that are further from the streets (i.e., closer to the water). In general, while there would be some additional localized noise due

to additional vehicles on streets that are currently lightly traveled, the character of these streets is not defined by traffic levels and additional traffic would not, in and of itself, redefine the character. Therefore, no adverse impacts to neighborhood character as a result of noise can be expected.

Secondary Study Area

The impact of the proposed action on the study area beyond the proposed action area would be likely to stem from the socioeconomic effects of the proposed action on these areas. To the extent that the proposed action would spur development outside the borders of the proposed action area, changes in neighborhood character could occur.

As discussed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the proposed action is expected to create substantial development pressures in the area beyond the proposed action area, and therefore has the potential to cause significant indirect residential displacement. In recent years, the proposed action area has experienced a substantial amount of new market rate residential development and an influx of residents with higher-income occupations. Subject to future market conditions, existing trends would be likely to continue with or without the proposed action, and Greenpoint-Williamsburg would be expected to remain residential in nature, with a deteriorating industrial waterfront. In the future without the proposed action, approximately 2,188 dwelling units would be developed within the surrounding study area, strengthening the already residential character. These new residential developments would likely increase traffic and noise in the area, although these increases are not expected to impact neighborhood character.

While some additional residential and retail and service establishments may develop outside the borders of the proposed action area due to the proposed action, these new residential buildings and businesses should not cause significant changes in the character of these neighborhoods. However, the socioeconomic characteristics of new households introduced under the proposed action would probably be different from the characteristics of the population living in a portion of the unprotected housing units in some parts of the study area. These residents constitute the "vulnerable" population—those who would be subject to indirect displacement under the proposed action. As discussed above, it is estimated that vulnerable population in the Greenpoint-Williamsburg study area is limited to approximately 2,510 residents who could be subject to indirect displacement pressures under the proposed action. Roughly 1,890 of these residents live within a ¼-mile radius of the proposed action area. Overall, the vulnerable population represents less than 2 percent of the total study area population and between 2 and 3 percent of the population living in the proposed action area and primary study area.

While the indirect displacement of residents as a result of the proposed action would be an adverse socioeconomic impact, this impact would be offset by the creation of thousands of new residences in the area. In addition, as mentioned above, the socioeconomic characteristics of the population living in the proposed action area is already changing and is likely to continue to change over the next several years. As such, while socioeconomic conditions would change as a result of the proposed action, it would be consistent with the current trend towards residential and commercial development. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character are expected to result from the proposed action on the blocks surrounding the proposed action area.

E. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed action would result in a change in the character of Greenpoint-Williamsburg in general, and specifically in the blocks along the waterfront. Were the proposed action not to change the character of the area, it would fail to achieve the project's goals.

A close examination of the future No-Action condition, compared to the analyses of conditions as projected in 2013 resulting from the proposed action, indicates that the action would result in an overall change in the character of the proposed action area with respect to land use, urban design and visual resources, and street-level pedestrian activity. While a number of significant adverse traffic impacts were identified, the majority of these impacts occur in locations that would already be congested in 2013 in the absence of the proposed action. It is expected that these transportation impacts would not significantly alter neighborhood character. The neighborhood character of the area would not be impacted by noise increases resulting from the proposed action. In addition, the proposed action would not affect historic resources so as to affect neighborhood character.

Overall, the proposed action would alter neighborhood character in beneficial ways, by creating opportunities for new housing development on underutilized and vacant land formerly used for manufacturing, where there is no longer a concentration of industrial activity and where strong demand for housing exists. It would bring existing non-conforming residential uses into conformance. In addition, the mixed-use districts proposed in certain areas would permit the continuation of light industrial uses as well as the residential re-use of underutilized and vacant land. Replacing the Northside and Franklin Street Special District designations with residential and Special Mixed Use District (MX) designations has a range of benefits, including greater flexibility for residential and mixed-use development, such as infill development, as well as more flexible home occupation provisions and height limits on new development.

In addition, the proposed action would facilitate the redevelopment of the area's derelict East River waterfront, establishing a blueprint for a revitalized waterfront with a continuous public walkway and enlarged parks along approximately 2 miles of the East River, including the mapping of a new park along the waterfront between North 9th Street and the northern edge of Bushwick Inlet. The proposed action would produce new waterfront development with a sensitive transition to the adjoining neighborhoods, a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, and a compelling skyline. Light industry and residences would be permitted to coexist in mixed-use areas, and manufacturing zoning would be retained in areas where concentrations of industrial activity exist.

As such, the characteristics of the neighborhood would be enhanced by simultaneously maintaining and fostering the neighborhood's mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses, reinforcing the neighborhood's street walls and traditional streetscape, and establishing a distinctive urban fabric with new large scale residential development along the waterfront and contextual districts along upland portions of the proposed action area to ensure that new development in this area integrates appropriately with the existing low-rise character. Therefore, the proposed action is expected to have many beneficial effects on neighborhood character and significant adverse impacts to overall neighborhood character are not expected.